

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's cultural policy must continue to support artistic freedom as a foundational principle of cultural life. Writers and artists need the ability to explore complexity, disagreement, memory, identity and social tension without fear of censorship or ideological prescription. A healthy cultural sector depends on creative risk, plurality of voices and the capacity for artists to challenge audiences as much as reflect them.

At the same time, the next National Cultural Policy presents an important opportunity to broaden how diversity is understood and supported across Australia's writing and literary sectors.

Much of the current discussion around representation rightly focuses on First Nations leadership and disability inclusion. However, there remains insufficient structural attention to the experiences and pathways of writers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, writers of colour, migrant and refugee communities, religious minorities, regional communities, older and younger writers, and those whose experiences sit outside dominant cultural and institutional networks.

Under Pillar 2, 'A Place for Every Story', diversity should not simply be understood as symbolic representation or audience visibility. It must also include equitable access to development opportunities, publishing pathways, mentorship, funding, leadership, critical discourse and cultural participation. Many writers continue to face barriers not because their stories lack value, but because institutional systems often privilege familiarity, existing networks and dominant cultural norms.

Importantly, support for diversity should not result in a narrowing of artistic expression or the expectation that artists produce work only within fixed identity frameworks. Writers should be free to create work that is political or apolitical, culturally specific or universal, experimental or traditional. Cultural policy should enable complexity rather than reduce artists to representative categories.

The policy should also recognise that cultural participation across generations is changing rapidly. Younger writers are engaging through digital and hybrid forms, while older artists often hold significant cultural memory, mentorship capacity and community leadership that remains under-recognised. Intergenerational cultural investment is therefore critical to sustaining a resilient literary ecosystem.

Australia's strength lies in the breadth of stories that make up our national cultural life. A forward-looking cultural policy should ensure that writers from all backgrounds are not only visible, but meaningfully supported to participate in shaping Australia's cultural future.

Ultimately, artistic freedom and inclusion are not opposing principles. The strongest cultural sectors are those that protect freedom of expression while creating the conditions for a broader range of voices, experiences and audiences to participate fully in cultural life.